ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A communications system consisting of a server system that stores software applications, a broadcast system that broadcasts the software applications, and a multiplicity of portable clients that each include a receiver having a tuner that is selectively tunable to receive a selected one of the software applications broadcasted by the broadcast system. The portable clients can be any type of portable data communications device, such as a hand-held, palm-top, or notebook computing device, a PDA, an intelligent cellular phone, or any other personal multimedia appliance or Network Computer (NC). The broadcast system can be any suitable satellite or terrestrial air or cable broadcast system. For example, a CATV broadcast network, a DBS broadcast network, an HDTV broadcast network, or other appropriate broadcast network could be utilized. The software applications can consist of a broad spectrum of different software applications, such as word processing, video games, spreadsheets, address books, calendars, and the like. Each of the portable data communications devices includes a receiver that has a tuner that is selectively tunable to receive a selected one of a plurality of software applications broadcasted by a broadcast system, a user-interface that enables a user to select one of the broadcasted software applications for downloading, a processor for executing the downloaded software applications, and a modem for establishing a two-way communications link with a network control system. The two-way communications link includes a forward channel over which the portable data communications device can transmit client data to the network control system, and a return channel over which the network control system can transmit system data to the portable data communications device. The client data can include requests for unrecoverable software application data and client software download request data. The system data can include instructions for supervising the downloading of software applications, unrecoverable software application data, and download control data issued in response to the client software download request data. In one embodiment, the broadcast system broadcasts the software applications over different channels each occupying a different respective frequency band, and the tuner is selectively tunable to any selected one of the plurality of different frequency bands in order to receive the selected one of the broadcasted software applications.

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